

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 4 and 7 will remain pending in the application. Claims 1 and 7 will be amended, and claims 2, 5, 6 and 8-15 will be cancelled. Entry of the present amendment, reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takai et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0029096). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicants' independent claim 1 recites a central control system that controls multiple air conditioners. The central control system includes, inter alia, a central controller 300 connected to the multiple air conditioners 250 through a dedicated line (see, for example, paragraph [0029] of Applicants' specification). The central controller is configured to connect to a remote controller C via an Internet network and to receive a control command from the remote controller C. The central control system also includes a protocol converter 400 that performs a communication protocol conversion of a signal when the control command is transmitted to the multiple air conditioners through the Internet network.

Applicants' independent claim 7 recites a method of operating a central control system for multiple air conditioners which includes, inter alia, receiving, by a central controller, a control command for the multiple air conditioners that is transmitted from a remote controller over an Internet network, transmitting, by the central controller, the received control command based on an Ethernet

communication protocol to a protocol converter, physically separate from and attached locally through a cable with a central controller, converting, by the protocol converter, the received control command into a control command based on an air conditioner communication protocol, and transmitting the control command to the multiple air conditioners.

Takai is directed towards a management system for an air conditioner. In the system, a personal computer 100 used as a monitoring apparatus is connected via a converter unit 200 to an air conditioner 300. See paragraph [0025] of Takai. The converter unit 200 has transmission software 201 for data transfer to and from the personal computer 100 via USB 400, PAC transmission software 203 for data transfer to and from the air conditioner 300, and a converter 202 for data conversion between the personal computer and air conditioner. See paragraph [0028] of Takai.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai's converter unit 200 performs protocol conversion on all data transmitted between the personal computer 100 and the air conditioner 300 (to convert it from USB protocol to an air conditioner protocol). In contrast, Applicants submit that their protocol converter only performs protocol conversion on data received from a remote controller (see, for example, paragraph [0024] of Applicants' specification). In this regard, Applicants submit that their central controller is connected to air conditioners through a dedicated line, through which control commands originating from the central controller (rather than the remote controller) can be transmitted. Thus, as described, for example, at paragraph [0022] of Applicants' specification, the central controller 300 controls the multiple air conditioners 250 based on air

conditioner communication protocols, while the remote controller C controls the multiple air conditioners 250 using a suitable protocol, such as, for example, an Ethernet communication protocol.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection and allow claims 1, 3, 4 and 7.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Masui et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0140637). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Masui is directed towards an air conditioner control system which includes a central remote controller 5, and a remote monitor terminal 15. At page 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that the central processing means 10 and transmission means 13 of Masui's central remote controller 5 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller, and that the transmission means 6 of Masui's central remote controller 5 corresponds to Applicants' claimed protocol converter. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Applicants submit that Masui's transmission means 6 is not physically separate from and attached locally through a cable with the central processing means 10 and transmission means 13. Rather, Applicants submit that the transmission means 6, the central processing means 10 and the transmission means 13 are all part of the same central remote controller 5. See, e.g., Figure 1 of Masui.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the

Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection and allow claim 7.

In view of the current amendments to the claims, Applicants submit that none of the applied references describe each and every feature of Applicants' invention, as defined by the claims. Thus, Applicants submit that withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §102(e) rejections and allowance of the pending claims is proper.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants recognize that the current status of the present application is after-Final. However, Applicants submit that entry of the present amendment is proper under the current circumstances, as it is submitted that the present amendment does not raise new issues requiring further search and/or consideration, reduces the issues for appeal, and does not add new claims.

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Final Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

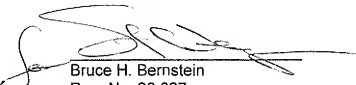
Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this

application, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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